

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 DAMASC 04646 180654Z

22

ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
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P 180624Z JUL 76

FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

TO AMEMBASSY BEIRUT PRIORITY

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S E C R E T DAMASCUS 4646

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR LE US

SUBJ: PROPOSED VISITS TO CHRISTIAN SECTOR

REF: (A) BEIRUT 6304, (B) DAMASCUS 4630

1. WE HAVE NOT DISCUSSED WITH SYRIAN AUTHORITIES THE SUGGESTION REF A THAT MURPHY TRAVEL TO THE CHRISTIAN-HELD SECTOR OF LEBANON. HOWEVER, GIVEN THE SUBSTANCE AND TENOR OF THE REMARKS OF FONMIN KHADDAM, REPORTED REF B, TO THE EFFECT THAT THE SARG HAS NO DIRECT CONTACT WITH THE CHRISTIAN SIDE, WE DO NOT BELIEVE THAT WE CAN GET SYRIAN ASSISTANCE IN ARRANGING A DIRECT TRIP BETWEEN SYRIAN-HELD AND CHRISTIAN-HELD PORTIONS OF LEBANON. SEVERAL PERSONS HAVE COME OUT OF LEBANON BY LAND DIRECTLY FROM CHRISTIAN TO SYRIAN TERRITORY AND WE UNDERSTAND THAT SOME HAVE MADE THE REVERSE TRIP AS WELL. ALL SUCH TRAVELERS WE HAVE TALKED TO, HOWEVER, INDICATE THAT PREFERRED ROUTE VARIES FROM DAY TO DAY AS LOCAL DRIVERS KNOWLEDGEABLE OF AREA DIRECT. NEITHER ZAHLE-AINTARA NOR FARAYA ROUTES ARE CONSIDERED SAFE YET. TRAVELERS HAVE COME VIA BACK ROADS WINDING THROUGH MOUNTAIN VILLAGES. WE DO NOT RULE OUT USE OF THIS ROUTE BUT FOR PRESENT THINK IT LESS DESIRABLE THAN OTHER ALTERNATIVES. (WE ALSO HAVE DOUBTS ABOUT THE ABILITY OF THE HEAVY, LOW-SLUNG NEW ARMORED CARS NOW IN DAMASCUS TO MAKE THE TRIP OVER THOSE NOW PROBABLY BADLY POT-HOLED ROADS.)

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2. IT TIME IS A FACTOR, QUICKEST WASY FOR MURPHY TO GET TO
CHRISITIAN-HELD TERRITORY WOULD BE BY CAR TO TARTOUS AND
BY BOAT FROM THERE TO JOUNIEH. WE UNDERSTAND THAT THIS
ROUTE HAS NOW BECOME REGULARIZED AND BELIEVE THAT MURPHY
COULD BE IN JOUNIEH WITHIN 48 HOURS OF GETTING THE GO
AHEAD. MOST PROVEN ROUTE IS, OF COURSE, DAMASCUS-ATHENS-
LARNACA-JOUINEH BUT THIS WOULD PROBABLY TAKE THREE TO
FOUR DAYS.
MURPHY

SECRET

NNN

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